

## Divorce Rates and COVID-19

Article By:

Taylor Brownwell

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### **With divorce rates spiking, some couples want to know their options for separating in 2020.**

All relationships involve a degree of conflict—and it's normal to argue more during stressful times. From worrying about your health and the health of your loved ones to facing increased financial uncertainty, all of the classic marital stressors have been amplified by the events of 2020.

For some couples, pandemic friction has involved a few more fights about the laundry or the savings account. For others, lockdown has exposed issues that run deeper and offered ample time for reflection, leaving them to wonder about their options for pursuing separation during the pandemic.

### **Covid's Impact on Relationships**

Relationship counselors consistently rank financial stress, boredom, disagreements about parenting, and arguing about household chores as the most common sources of relationship trouble.

With many couples stuck in the house, homeschooling children, and facing added financial uncertainty, it should come as no surprise that the coronavirus pandemic is placing additional strain on relationships that were already struggling.

Additionally, support systems have become more difficult to access. Venting to friends over coffee or spending a night out on the town just isn't an option right now. If you've been using these outlets to manage stress—or, perhaps, to avoid dealing with deeper problems—you may find yourself suddenly in the position of having to confront your difference head on.

It's no surprise that given this, many marriages have reached their breaking point.

Although the recognition of real, substantive problems in a marriage can be a sobering moment, it is also a necessary and hopeful turning point on the road to a healthy future. One of the pandemic's brighter spots may be that it may prompt a refocusing on values and on what really matters, clarifying when the healthiest and wisest path forward for two people involves separation.

### **The Pandemic and Divorce Rates**

The evidence that the pandemic might lead to an uptick in divorce rates came early this year.

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By April, the interest in divorce had already [increased by 34%](#) in the US, with newer couples being the most likely to file for divorce. In fact, a full 20% of couples who had been married for five months or less sought divorce during this time period, compared with only 11% in 2019.

Some predict a continuation of this trend, anticipating that divorce rates will increase between 10% and 25% in the second half of the year.

One way of understanding this timeline is through the [collective disaster response curve](#), a model charting the phases through which a community moves in the wake of trauma. The curve shows increased energy and a sense of community cohesion in the period of time immediately following a disaster—it's the *"We'll get through this together!"* phase of disaster response. After a few weeks, the energy wears off, and disillusionment and depression can set in. During this period, couples may begin to struggle.

Experts also [observe](#) that when people are experiencing greater stress from sources external to a relationship, they struggle more to problem-solve within their relationships, and may inadvertently take out this stress on each other.

In the most serious cases, tensions can lead to violence, and 2020 saw a 9% increase in outreach to the National Domestic Violence Hotline compared to the same period last year. If you are experiencing domestic violence, there's help just a phone call away with the National Domestic Violence Hotline [here](#).

## **Can I still get divorced during the pandemic?**

If you're wondering whether or not you can still get divorced with everything going on, the answer is yes. Deciding to end a marriage is never easy, and with the pandemic altering the rhythms of life, it may feel particularly daunting. But there are many options to start the divorce process in 2020, and finding which path is best for you and your family is essential.

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National Law Review, Volumess X, Number 290

Source URL: <https://www.natlawreview.com/article/divorce-rates-and-covid-19>